

By: Hughes Allison

(COLD OPENING)

Announcer Just now, ladies and gentlemen, you heard this station identify itself. Another program, dramatic in nature, is in progress.....as of this instant. It has opened, according to the language of radio, cold. But the content of what you are about to hear....I suggest....is peculiarly warm. Disturbingly warm. The story? It began in a home, where....in company with his wife and their four-months' old baby....a plainclothes policeman listened, perhaps as you have listened, to a radio news-commentator say....

Sound

(FADE IN) INTERMITTENT GUGGLING OF INFANT. MAN CLEARING HIS THROAT. WOMAN SOFTLY HUMMING TO BABY.

Commentator: (FADE IN SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH SOUND) (FILTER TO PROVIDE ILLUSION OF VOICE VIA LOUDSPEAKER) There was loss of life. Property was destroyed. And throughout the nation there is the apprehension that these misfortunes upon the homefront may visit us again. What....we may well inquire..... causes these jungle-like clashes between the two peoples, both one people in terms of citizenship? Axis inspiration? The long dormant seeds of a social illness made suddenly and violently active by the overt ignorance of both peoples? Yes, ignorance can be overt!

Sound

RADIO SWITCH CUT OFF.

Mary

Thanks, Tom

Tom (SIGHS) Tired of even the thought of it, aren't you?

Mary (CHUCKLES, SOMEWHAT BITTERLY AND A LITTLE WEARILY) Being what I am, I've had to think about it all my life. In peace-time. Now, in war-time. Certainly, I'm tired of it.

Tom I know.

Mary But it's got its dirty fingers wrapped around my very heart this time. And I'm afraid.

Tom Mary, you mustn't let yourself feel that way. After all I'm not the only.....

Mary (INTERRUPTING) I can't help it, Tom! You're in the middle of it now. And you're my heart, brown boy! And God knows I want you to stay around here a long, long time. Long enough.....for this baby in my arms to know you're his daddy without me telling him so.

Tom Say! When that kid is as big and strong as.... as Joe Louis, I'll still be around to....

Mary (INTERRUPTING) Please do what I've asked you to do, Tom.

Tom It er....well.... Aw, Mary!

Mary Tell Headquarters to take you off that special detail.

Tom Special or routine, it's my job.

Mary Listen, Tom. You know and I know....the mood of both sides is dynamite. Just needs only a slight jar. After all! Why get caught right between such unreasonableness!

Tom Because it's my job to help put reason back on a twenty-four hour basis. (CHANGE OF TONE.) Here, let me hold the kid for awhile.

Mary (HANDING HIM THE BABY) And before you can do that...

Tom (TO BABY, GURGLING LOUDER) Ah! Want your daddy to bounce you?!

Marybefore you can do that, the dynamite will blow up! And you....with your special detail... will be sitting right on top of the explosion. (SIGHS) It's too dangerous, Tom! And...and the man you're working with! What if he is...as you are.... a detective? He's not your color. He's on the other side.

Tom I've known Jimmie Hardwick a long, long....

Mary (INTERRUPTING) I don't care if you have known him all your....

Tom (INTERRUPTING) Listen, Mary! Right here in this overgrown city, I went to grammar school with Jimmie Hardwick. Together, we graduated from high school, college and the police academy. We donned uniforms on the same day. We were promoted to the plainclothes squad on the same day. I know the fellow.

Mary But I don't! Never met him. Talked to him only when he's telephoned you here at home.

Tom: Just one of those things, Mary. Time. Business.

Mary And another thing. From what you've told me, your friend hasn't got a wife and child to think about.

SOUND TELEPHONE RINGS.

Tom But he is thinking about decency.

Mary I'll get it. (GOING AWAY) And I hope it isn't your friend calling to....(PICKS UP 'PHONE RECEIVER) Yes?

Hardwick (FILTER) Hardwick, Mrs. Pendleton.

Mary (AWAY) It would be.

HARDWICK (FILTER) What er....expecting me to call?

TOM For me, Mary?

MARY (AWAY) Hold on just a second. (SIGHS) I'll call Tom.

TOM (GOING AWAY) Who is it? Jimmie?

HARDWICK (FILTER) Thanks. But how did you know I wasn't aiming to talk to you, Mrs. Pendleton?

MARY (AWAY) Because I know how you aim. (TO TOM) I'll take the baby.

TOM (AWAY) Okay. (HANDS HER BABY; TAKES RECEIVER)
Hello?

HARDWICK (FILTER) Jimmie.

TOM (AWAY) What goes?

HARDWICK (FILTER) Plenty! Know that old woman, living in the ancient house on the corner of L Avenue and 130th Street?

TOM (AWAY) She's past eighty. Lives alone, and on some sort of pension.

HARDWICK (FILTER) Your color. Wouldn't sell her place.... to anybody, at any price.

TOM (AWAY) Wouldn't be frozen out. Got a couple of threats. What about her?

HARDWICK (FILTER) Plenty! She's disappeared. There's a rumour spreading she's been done away with.

TOM (AWAY) Before the rumour, what facts?

HARDWICK (FILTER) A car drove up to her door. Not a taxi. The chauffeur and another man...both my side of the fence...escorted the old woman between them from her door to the car. All the facts.

TOM (Away) Now the rumour.

HARDWICK (FILTER) A kid witnessed the sidewalk incident. Told his father the old woman was forced into the car, and that the car drove off in the direction of the river.

TOM (AWAY) How far has that kind of talk gone?

HARDWICK (FILTER) Headquarters got a call that the kid's old man made a bee-line for Carter's Juke-box tavern.

TOM (AWAY) I know the place.

HARDWICK (FILTER) Information is....the crowd in the joint has been growing for about an hour. Riot talk. A squad of white cops wouldn't do more than ... Well, no reason for that. If there were a reason for a squad....you know what would happen.

TOM (AWAY) Has any news about this thing reached your side?

HARDWICK (FILTER) You mean the kids who used to rock the old woman's windows? No. Not yet. Might though. And if the talk on your side gets to this side....

TOM (AWAY) Yeah, I know.

HARDWICK (FILTER) Your job to keep things in bound over at the juke-box joint. If I were to go in there with you now....well, I don't have to say more.

TOM (AWAY) You find the old woman. I'll ride herd on the tavern.

HARDWICK (FILTER) Listen fellow! Be careful. There's plenty of dynamite in town. The fuse might be where you're going. So take care of yourself if somebody strikes a match.

MUSIC MUSICAL BRIDGE.

SOUND (FADE IN) JUKE BOX GOING FULL BLAST. NOISE OF CROWD OF MEN. AD-LIB: "TWO BEERS"; "ONE RYE AND A GINGERALE CHASER COMING UP." CLINK OF GLASSES ON BAR.

JOE (TRYING TO TALK ABOVE JUKE BOX MUSIC) Now dat ol' woman never bothered nobody! Dat house wuz....

SAM (INTERRUPTING & YELLING) Cat jump it, Carter! Turn dat dog-rat music down!

CARTER (AWAY) Fer what?! To hear Joe go over dat race-stuff one mo' time? He been telling dat same tale fer the las' hour! Give the sho-nuff brass-horns a chanct!

JOE (YELLING ANGRILY) The other mister man stays up nights planning how to keep you down!

BLUE Sho' is the trufe!

SOUND TAKE JUKE BOX UNDER. HOLD.

JOE And you can't be bothered wid the details of how he takes from your own kind what don't belong to him!

CARTER (COMING TO MIKE) Okay! You ain't got so much juke box competition now. But dat mouf of yours gonna talk up plenty of another kind.

JOE Yeah?

CARTER Yeah! And I don't want it in here...breaking up my plade.

JOE You mean dat gang from 'cross town?

CARTER Dat's just who I mean!

JOE Dew ain't comin' over in dis part of town. Aw naw! Dat wuz use to be! Dis time....we goin' over dere!

SAM Listen Carter. How much mo',crap you think folks like us gonna take?

SOUND FOOTSTEPS FOLLOWED BY MIKE GOING AWAY FROM MEN TALKING. COIN DROPPED IN PHONE BOX.
VOICES OF MEN RECED TO BACKGROUND AS MIKE MOVES TO 'PHONE.

CARTER I ain't sayin' we don't take plenty! Dat ain't the point!

AT MIKE

SOUND:
Phone dial.
(away filtered) phone ringing.

(away) phone-jack plugged in.

IN BACKGROUND

JOE:
Make your point den.

CARTER:
Point is...we don't have
to go looking for trouble.
(FADE) Trouble?

HOLD JUKE BOX MUSIC & CROSS-FADE FOLLOWING OVER JUKE BOX:

VOICE:
(filter) Headquarters.

SOUND:
Close phone-booth doors.

FOA:
(simultaneously with doors)
Pendleton, calling from Carter's.

VOICE:
(filter) How's the going over
there?

(CROWD IS HEARD; BUT SPEECH
IS INDISTINCT.)

FOA:
A tornado's blowing up.

VOICE:
(filter) (fade) Signs of a storm
this end, too.

CARTER:
(fade in) Trouble's coming our
way all the time.

BLUE:
Like it wuz flyin' in a....

JOE:
(interrupting) Shut up, Blue!
You ain't got the sense of
a....

BLUE:
(interrupting) Who you shuttin'
up? I 'mowed dat ol' woman
much as anybody here!

JOE:
You goin' wid us....when we
goes 'cross torn to git even
fer (fade) what happened to her?

VOICE:
(filter) (fade in) What's the nature
of things there?

TOM:
Loose tongues have put it out that
the old woman was thrown in the
river by the crowd that wanted her
property.

VOICE:
(filter) Same story was brought to
this end. Kids have had a rock
battle already. (CROWD'S SPEECH INDISTINCT)

TOM:
(fade) What about Hardwick?

BLUE:
(fade in) I ain't sayin' I is
or ain't going' cross town. What
'bout the law?

JOE:
Whose law?

BLUE:
Jest the law!

JOE:
When did dey make the law fer
blue-black folks like you,
Blue?

SOUND:
(fade) Guffaws from crowd.

VOICE:
(fade in) (filter) Hardwicks got a
lead the old woman's gone to visit
people she use to work for. He's
out running that down. No success
yet.

TOM:
A lot will depend on that lead.

VOICE:
(filter) A squad's nightsticks can
scatter that crowd, you know!

TOM:
That kind of action now....would grow
crowds over here like mushrooms. You'd
need the army next.

VOICE:
(filter) (fade) that bad, huh?

SOUND:
(fade in) Crowd's guffaws.

BLUE:
Dat's all right! The law givme
some rights!

SAM:
Name your rights, Blue.

BLUE:
Well.....

JOE:
(interrupting) How much rights
is your own brother...what's in
the army....got?

SAM:
Yeah! Down in the camp.....
where he training at...dey
ain't a dern thing 'cept mo'
soldiers, rattle-snakes and
sand.

JOE:
And what happens to him when he
goes into the little town on a
pass? How dey treat him?

SAM:
Like he wuz mud! Runned him
clean out of town...'cause he
tried to buy himself a sandwich.

BLUE:
Dey sold him the sandwich!

JOE:
Yeah!sho! But dey never let
him set down and eat it!

SAM:
(fade) And him wid a uniform
on too!

TOM:
(fade in) This crowd is lashing
itself into a frenzy....reviewing
its troubles, past and present. In
a little while.....

VOICE:
(filter) Yeah?

TOM:
Nothing but a look at the old woman
herself.....sound and healthy....
will keep the crowd this side of town.

VOICE:
(filter) I'll pass that on to Hardwick.
Better watch your step in the meantime.
Maybe the old woman and the river did
get together.

TOM:
I'm hanging up and hoping.

VOICE:
(filter) Right!

SOUND: RECEIVER PLACED ON HOOK. OPEN PHONE-BOOTH DOORS.
BRING UP SPEECH FROM CROWD MEMBERS WITH FOOTSTEPS
RETURNING TO BAR.

JOE: (Fade IN ON CUE FROM "VOICE" SAYING "RIGHT") Pay us less for doing the same work dey do...when dey'll give us a job. Make us pay rich-folks'-rent to live in pig-pens. Jim Crow us! Lynch us! Even education don't hep us when we gits dat. (CHANGE OF TONE) What kind of engineer did dat college make you, professor?

PROFESSOR (WELL EDUCATED: BUT PROSCRIPTION HAS TURNED HIM INTO NO MORE THAN AN ELEGANT AND SUAVE BARFLY.) Civil engineer.....to be exact.

JOE Do you git treated civilly when you 'plies for a job? Naw, you don't! Or you wouldn't be in here tryin' to snag a sucker for a drink.

PROFESSOR Ah! Which reminds me! Mr. Carter, as I've already explained....you've such an excellent oasis here, sir....but my purse has been misplaced and...well, you see....

CARTER (INTERRUPTING) A pick and shovel might hep you find it!

JOE Git what I mean! (CHANGE OF TONE) Give him a drink, Carter. Big Joe'll stand for it.

PROFESSOR That's good of you, my friend. (CHANGE OF TONE) Just put the bottle here.....in front of me, Mr. Carter.

SOUND CLINK OF BOTTLE & GLASS ON BAR.

CARTER Okay, bum!

PROFESSOR I'll beg you to be more polite, sir.

JOE Lay off him Carter.

CARTER Now listen here, Joe....

JOE (INTERRUPTING WITH A YELL) Shut up! Big Joe's feeling his madness tonight. Throwin' dat old woman in the river wuz the las' straw. And I'm ready to move on 'cross town to pay off some old scores. Who's coming wid me? You sam?

SAM You know dern well I'm gonna be in on dat party!

JOE Dey got it comin' to 'em! Who else is goin' wid me and Sam?

CROWD AD-LIB "DEY BEEN OVER HERE! LET'S GO OVER DERE!" "MIGHT AS WELL GIT IN THE FIRST LICK DIS TIME!" "COUNT ME IN" "WHAT WE WAITIN' ON?" "YEAH! LET'S ALL GIT IN ON DIS PARTY!"

JOE Okay den!

TOM Wait a minute, boys! Wait a minute!

JOE Yeah? Wait for what?

TOM For just this. How do you know that the old woman just didn't go off on her own? Maybe to visit friends?

SAM Dat old woman ain't been two blocks away from her house in two years! Maybe just to the store and back. We ain't waiting now for.....

JOE (BREAKING IN) Hold it a minute, Sam! (CHANGE OF TONE) You look might familär to me, big boy.

TOM Do I?

JOE Yeah.

BLUE I knows him, Joe.

JOE Do you, Blue?

BLUE By sight. No more'n dat.

JOE Yeah?

BLUE Ain't seen him lately....right 'round here, though.

JOE Where you seen him at before, Blue?

BLUE All I knows.....he use to be a cop.

JOE You sure?

BLUE He got a mouf. Let him use it for hisself.

TOM Okay, Blue. I will. Now a little while ago,
Blue....didn't you say you had some rights?

JOE Never mind what Blue say awhile back.

TOM But what Blue said awhile back ---was pretty
important. He mentioned the law. Well, I'm a
piece of the law. And Blue has got some rights.
Good ones, too. Blue's got the right of petition
in this country. The right to raise his voice in
protest. The right to agitate for better housing
and better schools. The right to agitate for
decent wages for a fair day's work. He's got a
right to join a labor union and agitate for.....

JOE (INTERRUPTING) Brother, you talk like things wuz
gittin' better for us....instead of worse.

TOM Mister! Things would get better....if a few like
you....on both sides...would stop throwing rocks
in the machinery of Democracy we're trying to put
together in this country.

JOE That machinery is taking a mighty long time to put
together, copper.

TOM Sure it is. But we're going to put it together,
make it work too! In spite of guys like you with
more mouth than brains.

JOE Listen to a guy what oughta be wid us... 'stead of
against us! Why you two-faced....

TOM (BREAKING IN) Don't try to throw that bottle, Joe.

JOE What's gonna stop me?

TOM THIS. (DRAWS GUN)

SAM He can't have more'n six bites in that...

PROFESSOR (INTERRUPTING) Be cautious, gentlemen. I heartily
advise against an attempt to rush a man with a gun.
Besides....if I may say so....why can't we give some
quiet consideration to the idea that Democracy rests
on a foundation of law and order?

JOE Shut up, you old sot!

PROFESSOR My dear sir! You've been exceedingly free with your
tongue. Even to the extent of starting a rather
distressing story on the barest of evidence. So let
others have a voice here.

JOE How'd this cop git in here, anyhow?!

PROFESSOR Oddly enough...I invested my last nickle in a phone-
call which I presume brought....

JOE (INTERRUPTING) Oh yeah! Now you got him in here.
How you gonna get him out?

PROFESSOR (CHUCKLING) The way things are....I'm beginning to
wonder how I'll get myself out.

TOM Step over here behind me, professor.

PROFESSOR If you don't mind....I prefer to remain close
beside this excellent bottle of whiskey. May help
remind me of some further words to use in defence
of Democracy.

TOM Keep your distance there, Sam. I mean it!

JOE Democracy for us....got to be more'n words now!

HARDWICK (AWAY) Alright fellows! Relax.

WOMAN (AWAY) Why do I have to come into a saloon, officer?

HARDWICK (COMING TO MIKE) To help give law and order a hand, lady.

WOMAN (FADE) Nothings happened to me. I'm alright.

MUSIC MUSICAL BRIDGE.

HARDWICK (FADE IN) That's all, Mrs. Pendleton, the old woman...of her own free will... had gone to visit friends.

MARY (CHUCKLING) Thanks for finding her in time, Mr. Hardwick.

TOM You see, Mary....he isn't a bad cop when you get to know him.

HARDWICK Sorry the baby's asleep. Like to see him. (CHANGE OF TONE.) Oh yes! Tom, what was that Joe was saying just as I and the old lady came in?

TOM Just as you came in?

HARDWICK Yes.

TOM Something, Jimmie, all the Joes are saying. If you hadn't turned up then, I just couldn't have held that crowd.

MARY What was it he said, Tom?

TOM Just this. "Democracy for us....got to be more'n words now!"

MUSIC UP & OUT.

ANNOUNCER

.....Credits.....